EPI Update for Friday, September 23, 2011 Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology (CADE) lowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

Items for this week's EPI Update include:

- West Nile virus activity continues in Western Iowa
- Encourage safe practices on the farm
- Autumn outings to orchards and pumpkin patches
- Home food safety mythbusters
- Meeting announcements and training opportunities

West Nile virus activity continues in Western Iowa

Five human cases of West Nile virus have been confirmed this year in Western Iowa and one additional case is being investigated. The confirmed cases include two in Pottawattamie, one in Fremont, one in Harrison, and one in Mills counties. It is especially important for healthcare providers in the western Iowa counties impacted by flooding to encourage patients to take measures to prevent mosquito bites. Specific measures include:

- Use insect repellent with DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus.
 Always follow the label recommendations.
- Avoid outdoor activities at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts, pants, shoes, and socks whenever possible while outdoors.
- When possible, eliminate standing water around the home because that's where mosquitoes lay eggs.

For additional West Nile virus information and resources visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/WNV.aspx.

Encourage safe practices on the farm

As we approach harvest, healthcare providers should continue to encourage safe practices on the farm. According to preliminary IDPH surveillance data, there have been 60 work-related traumatic fatalities in Iowa in 2011. Farmers or farm workers accounted for 17 of the fatalities, with an additional five fatalities occurring during work in support of agriculture, such as crop dusting, transportation of farm products, or grain handling (11 of these 22 deaths have occurred since July 1st).

There are many farm safety resources available at these partner websites:

- National Educational Center for Agricultural Health (NECAS): www.necasag.org/
- Iowa's Center for Agricultural Safety and Health(I-CASH): www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/
- Great Plains Center for Agricultural Health (GPCAH): www.public-health.uiowa.edu/gpcah/
- Iowa Fatality Assessment & Control Evaluation (FACE) Program: www.public-health.uiowa.edu/face/

Healthcare providers are also reminded that agricultural injuries requiring medical attention are reportable to IDPH. For additional information visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/reportable_diseases.asp or call 515-281-4930.

Autumn outings to orchards and pumpkin patches

Families and children's groups frequently take field trips to pumpkin patches and orchards this time of year. Such trips may be great fun, but people must be aware of certain risks. Some orchards and pumpkin patches may sell or offer free samples of fresh apple juice or cider. Healthcare providers should encourage all parents, caregivers, and teachers to make sure any juice or cider consumed at any location is pasteurized.

Past outbreaks of *E. coli* O157 and other pathogens have originated from juice or cider that was only flash pasteurized or not pasteurized at all. If product labeling is unclear, ask the location owners or operators whether the juice or cider being offered has been pasteurized. Juice or cider which is contaminated with *E. coli* O157.H7 does not look, smell, or taste different from normal apple juice or cider.

Unpasteurized products may be purchased as freshly pressed from local orchards, roadside stands, or farmer's markets. They may also be found on ice or in refrigerated display cases, and in produce sections at grocery stores. Do not assume that because the juice is hot or bottled that it is safe for consumption. Complete pasteurization is necessary to kill organisms that have the potential to cause significant illness. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) advises that concerned consumers can reduce their risk of illness by heating their unpasteurized apple cider to at least 170°F.

For more information about food-borne illnesses, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/Cade/Foodborne.aspx.

Home food safety mythbusters (part 4)

September is National Food Safety Education Month and IDPH encourages all Iowans to learn the truth behind some common food safety 'myths.' This week's myth is about organic foods.

Myth: Locally-grown, organic foods will never give me food poisoning.

Fact: Any food, whether organic or conventional, could become unsafe with illness-causing foodborne bacteria at any point during the chain from the farm to the table. Consumers in their homes can take action to keep their families safe. That is why it is important to reduce your risk of foodborne illness by practicing the four steps: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill.

To learn more about how to reduce your risk of foodborne illness and for additional information about food safety myths, visit www.idph.state.ia.us/eh/food_safety.asp.

Meeting announcements and training opportunities

The 2011 TB Case Management Conference will be held September 27-28, 2011 at the Genesis Hospital Adler Education Center, Davenport, Iowa. For more information, visit www.heartlandntbc.org/training.asp.

Join the IDPH Occupational Health and Safety Surveillance Program and our partners at the 2011 Midwest Regional Agricultural Safety and Health Conference. The conference will be held in Des Moines on November 16-17, 2011. For additional information and registration visit www.public-health.uiowa.edu/icash/events/MRASH/2011/index.html.